



Larry Toomer
Councilmember, Town of Bluffton

Larry Toomer was elected to Town Council in 2012. While this is Toomer's first elected term, he has lived Bluffton's "State of Mind," for more than five decades.

He personifies both sides of Bluffton's personality; laid-back yet a fierce defender of Bluffton's culture and character.

His livelihood and his family history are deeply rooted in Bluffton being the last true coastal village in the South.

As a fourth-generation fisherman and May River mariculture farmer, he owns the Bluffton Oyster Factory, which is the last hand-shucking oyster house in South Carolina. Located on the banks of the May River, the Bluffton Oyster Factory has continuously harvested local oysters since 1899 and is recognized as a historic structure.

Toomer employs more than 50 people who harvest, shuck and sell oysters, fish, crabs and shrimp and depend on the May River for their living.

The love of the Lowcountry's natural resources and the ability to make a living on them has been a part of Toomer's family for generations. His grandfather opened an oyster business on Hilton Head Island in 1913.

Toomer and his family also own Bluffton Oyster Company, a seafood restaurant in Bluffton's Old Town.

Growing up in an oyster factory and fishing since he was eight years old are among the main reasons why protecting the May River's pristine waters is Toomer's top priority as a councilmember.

"I have saltwater in my blood," Toomer said. "The water is my office; it's where I got my education and where I continue to gain a lifetime of experience. It continues to be a never-ending stream of learning and we must protect it for ourselves and for everyone who will enjoy the River after us."

Toomer said another forefront issue which relates to the May River is preserving Bluffton's past as we progress towards the future.



"We love Bluffton because it has history, it has culture and it is unique," Toomer said. Part of that Town character, Toomer said, is assuring our littlest residents have plenty of open space, recreational forums and parks.

"Open space and parks are vital to community," Toomer said. "Recreation is important to our children and gathering is important to community-building."

Toomer is a graduate of Bluffton's H.E. McCracken High School. Toomer said, ironically, the building which is now Town Hall was also Toomer's elementary school in the mid-60s.

Toomer lives in the Old Town Historic District with his wife, Tina. They have five children and six grandchildren. The family tradition continues, for many of his family members, still work in the oyster and restaurant business.

Toomer is involved in the South Carolina Seafood Alliance and the South Carolina Shrimpers Association. He is also an advisor and frequent speaker for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Health and Environmental Controls and the Sea Grant Consortium.

Toomer attends and volunteers at Bluffton's Lowcountry Community Church.